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PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP IN POSTSECONDARY TECHNICAL INSTITUTES IN GEORGIA

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The LAI (Leader Attributes Inventory), which identifies 37 leadership attributes, was used as the survey instrument to determine perceptions of presidents and faculty of technical institutes in Georgia toward the leadership attributes of the presidents. Data analysis was conducted based on data collected from 30 presidents and 354 faculty respondents at Georgia's 32 postsecondary technical institutes. Findings indicated that presidents and their faculty members do not agree on leadership attributes as demonstrated by presidents at technical institutes in Georgia.

During the 1990s, vocational education and this nation face a combined force of societal and workforce

changes -- an aging population, multicultural diversity, a changing family structure, need for advanced technological skills, collaboration and teamwork, and dramatic technological advances in the workplace. Vocational and technical education programs must respond appropriately to these changes in order to provide opportunities for the nation's workforce. These challenges call for superior leadership during unstable times ahead to provide vision and direction for the future.

According to Neil Edmunds (1988), former president of the American Vocational Association, those who will lead vocational education into the 21st century must be shareholders in a unifying vision; these leaders must understand the broad scope of vocational education. They must be skilled communicators; they must be as comfortable outside the educational setting as within it, moving easily among people from government, education, and business.

In recognition of the need for effective leadership in vocational education, federal legislative mandates (specifically the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act Amendments of 1990) have been enacted to provide for leadership development and leadership research (AVA Guide, 1990). The National Center for Research in Vocational Education is required by federal law to provide leadership development services to vocational educators. "The law, however, offers no clues about the way in which the requirement is to be satisfied" (Moss & Liang, 1990, p. 1). The long-range goal is to increase the number and quality of leaders to meet the challenges facing vocational education.

In its Annual Report (1990), the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education proclaimed that Georgia's economic future is directly linked to the ability to provide and maintain an up-to-date, trained work force to meet the challenge of changing technology. To provide these services, Georgia's postsecondary technical institutes must be innovative, flexible centers of high technology, with a marketing approach that will attract a diversity of industries. In addition to training people for employment, technical institutes in the state must take a proactive role in creating opportunities for the communities they serve by recruiting new industries and developing innovative programs and services. To meet these demands, the technical institutes must be able to identify trends and develop strategic plans. To accomplish these tasks, according to Trapnell (1990), leadership development programs must be strengthened to bring about the creation of new leaders and the modification of present leaders of technical institutes to assure the effective delivery of sound technical education programs. Surely, there are numerous presidents of technical institutes across Georgia who are quite successful. Others might not possess some of the leadership attributes that were documented by this study. According to Finch, Gregson, and Faulkner (1989), future vocational education administrator-preparation programs should target key leader attributes and ensure that these attributes are accounted for in the preparation experience.

Effective leaders for vocational education should be prepared to offer the necessary leadership skills which will be required for the future. Leadership in vocational education will involve not only knowing where to go next but also knowing how to make the vision a reality (Edmunds, 1988).

Background and Theoretical Framework

Leadership studies reach into the past several decades. Leaders have been studied and labeled according to particular styles (autocratic, democratic, laissez faire); attributes (insightfulness, adaptability, vision, accountability, communication, confidence, persistence, enthusiasm, etc.); and situations. Endless lists of desirable attributes and styles have been offered by various researchers and theorists. Leadership has been defined in many different ways -- in terms of behavior and individual traits, power, interactive patterns, role relationships, and perception of others regarding legitimacy of influence (McPherson, Crowson, & Pitner, 1986). "Leadership is hard to define: we know it when we see it, but it is hard to predict" (Green, 1988, p. 9).

The National Center for Research in Vocational Education (Moss & Johansen, 1991) created a conceptualization of leadership, which was used as the theoretical framework for this study. Moss and Liang (1990) and Moss and Johansen (1991) compiled a list of 37 leadership attributes from a review of literature. After using these 37 leadership attributes to develop the LAI (Leader Attributes Inventory), they conducted

research studies at the University of Minnesota using the LAI scale (LAI-Other scale). The researchers hypothesized that leader attributes could be clustered into the three broad groups of: social skills, personal characteristics, and management skills. The authors surveyed educators in Minnesota technical schools and found that most of the instructors felt that attributes which tended to satisfy job-related needs were deemed most important; although the authors felt that inspiring a shared vision was an attribute critical to what effective leaders should be doing.

For the purposes of support for the LAI-Other instrument, the authors conducted three studies to test the validity, reliability, and utility of the research instrument. The first of these studies was conducted at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University by Finch, Gregson, and Faulkner (1989). The researchers conducted a qualitative analysis of highly successful secondary and postsecondary vocational administrators in seven states. The researchers concluded that most identified behaviors did lend themselves to Moss's listing of leadership attributes on the LAI instrument. The second study was conducted at the University of Minnesota (Moss & Liang, 1990). The authors administered the LAI-Other instrument to a random sample of full-time vocational instructors in Minnesota's 34 postsecondary technical colleges. The third study (Moss & Johansen, 1991) was conducted at the University of Minnesota using a class of graduate students majoring in management. Statistical comparisons between the two studies clearly reveal their consistency. "Given that the perceptions of subordinates is a proper way to assess leadership effectiveness (as called for by the NCRVE conceptualization), and that the four tasks of leadership used as criteria of effectiveness are appropriate, the results of the three studies demonstrate that all of the thirty-seven leader attributes are highly related to the leadership effectiveness of vocational administrators and business managers" (Moss & Johansen, 1991, p. 13).

Several contemporary researchers propose that the major thrust for leadership study should emphasize an examination of leadership and followership. Kouzes and Posner (1991) surveyed managers and workers nationally in several studies to determine which characteristics they admired most in leaders. They determined that the four characteristics most admired in leaders were honesty, competence, vision, and inspiration. Blended together, these four attributes constituted credibility. These studies offered clear reasons for organizational leaders to take seriously how their employees perceived them, as opposed to how they perceived themselves.

Consequently, much of the recent research on the topic of leadership has investigated the expectations that followers have of leaders, to determine the extent to which their perceptions of leadership matched what leaders themselves said they did. Although very few studies have been conducted in the area of leadership versus followership, several research authors have addressed the issue in more recent years. McPherson, Crowson, and Pitner (1986) asserted that leadership surely meant followership -- that leadership cannot exist in the absence of people who respond to the leader. From a purely educational setting, Andrews (1987) proposed the idea that one of the reasons earlier researchers did not discover as much as they might have regarding good leadership in education was that the researchers were not asking the ones who supposedly were being led: the teachers. Campbell, Corbally, and Nystrand (1983) suggested that leadership was a process through which an individual (the leader) secured the cooperation of others (the followers) toward goal achievement in a particular setting. Through their studies, Caldwell and Spinks (1988) found that the prime importance of any leader was gaining the commitment of others to a vision and then ensuring that the vision shape the policies, plans, and day-to-day activities in the organization.

Black and English (1986) addressed the leadership-followership dilemma from the standpoint of power. . . that "power is a perception about a relationship between people. Power is as power is perceived. The secret to power is not in the person who may choose to use it, but how people perceive its use. The key to power is in the eyes of the beholder" (Black & English, 1986, p. 9). According to Bennis (1990), leaders of the future must know, understand, and permit themselves to be influenced by the people they presume to lead; otherwise, their plans, however fine, will be subverted.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of leaders and their followers regarding leadership attributes which both groups deem important for postsecondary technical education in Georgia. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to determine how the presidents of technical institutes in Georgia viewed their leadership attributes and how selected faculty at those technical institutes viewed leadership attributes of their presidents. This investigation addressed the following question:

Are presidents' perceptions of their individual leadership attributes correlated to randomly selected faculties' perceptions of the presidents' leadership attributes in technical institutes in Georgia?

Methodology and Data Analysis

Population

Two populations were used to select participants for the study. The first population consisted of all the presidents of the 32 technical institutes in Georgia. Thirty of the presidents completed all survey instruments. Twenty full-time faculty members from each technical institute were randomly selected to participate in the study. In the three technical institutes with fewer than twenty full-time faculty members, all faculty members were included in the study. A random sample of 624 (47.2%) was drawn from the second population of 1,322 full-time instructors at the 32 technical institutes in Georgia. Of the 624 instructors surveyed, 354 (56.7%) returned useable survey instruments.

The general profile of the presidents was that of a white male (there was one African American male and one female), over 50 years of age, with a graduate degree and five or fewer years of teaching experience, 21 or more years of experience in vocational education administration, and 6-10 years of experience as a technical institute president. Faculty members were primarily between the ages of 40-49 years of age and predominately white (over 90 percent). More than 23% of the faculty held less than baccalaureate degrees, 22% held baccalaureate degrees, nearly 34% held master's degrees, and 21% held specialist or doctoral degrees. Approximately 55 percent of faculty respondents were males and 45 percent were females.

Research Instrument and Data Collection

Moss' Leader Attributes Inventory -- LAI, developed at the University of Minnesota, was used as the survey instrument (Moss & Johansen, 1991). The LAI instrument is divided into two sections: the Leadership Attributes Inventory Self-Rating Form (used with the 32 technical institute presidents) and the Leadership Attributes Inventory Other-Rating Form (used with the random sample of 624 technical institute teachers).

The LAI Self-Rating research instrument (mailed to the presidents) was composed of 37 leadership attributes with accompanying statements provided for each of the 37 items intended to help clarify the meaning of the attributes. Respondents were instructed to indicate the response that best represented the extent to which the attribute currently described them. The following scale was explained to the respondents for the 37 items:

- 40% or less -- About 40% or less of the time this is an accurate description of me.
- 50% -- About 50% of the time this is an accurate description of me.
- 60% -- About 60% of the time this is an accurate description of me.
- 70% -- About 70% of the time this is an accurate description of me.
- 80% -- About 80% of the time this is an accurate description of me.
- 90% -- About 90% of the time this is an accurate description of me.
- 100% -- About 100% of the time this is an accurate description of me.

The LAI Other-Rating research instrument (mailed to instructors) was composed of the same 37 items as the LAI-Self research instrument except that the explanatory statements for each attribute were stated in the third person. Respondents were instructed to complete the instrument and rate the president who led their respective institute; the rating scale (from 40% of the time to 100% of the time) was the same as the scale which the presidents used with the LAI-Self Rating instrument.

Data Analysis and Findings

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data for the research question of the study. Additionally, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation statistic was used as a measure of association between the presidents' responses and the instructors' responses with an accepted significance level set at $p<.05$. Means and standard deviations were computed for each of the 37 attribute items for the 30 presidents who responded to this study (Table 1).

Table 1
Teacher Means (TM) and Standard Deviations (TSD); President Means (PM) and Standard Deviations (PSD); Mean Differences (d), Correlation Coefficients (r), and Probability Levels (p) for 37-Item Responses.

Item	TM				d	r	p
Energetic with stamina	5.09	1.08	5.70	1.49	.61	.3455	.061
Insightful	4.39	1.15	5.37	1.10	.98	.2304	.221
Adaptable, open, flexible	3.54	1.20	5.60	.86	2.06	.0374	.844
Creative, original, visionary	4.72	1.31	6.20	1.16	1.48	.2258	.230
Tolerant of ambiguity and complexity	3.90	1.27	5.17	1.51	1.27	.1586	.403
Achievement-oriented	5.14	1.10	6.20	.89	1.06	.1888	.318
Accountability	4.04	1.36	6.63	.67	2.59	-.1540	.417
Assertive, initiating	5.13	1.20	6.07	1.14	.94	.2021	.284
Confident, accepting of self	4.29	1.33	5.93	.91	1.64	.3736	
Willing to accept responsibility	5.04	1.14	6.23	1.36	1.19	.1836	.332
Courageous, resolute, persistent	4.52	1.39	5.93	1.23	1.41	.1496	.430
Enthusiastic, optimistic	4.79	1.27	6.07	1.05	1.28	.0820	.667
Tolerant of frustration	3.78	1.46	4.80	1.40	1.02	.1473	.437
Trustworthy, dependable reliable	4.50	1.41	6.37	.96	1.87	-.0060	.975
Venturesome, risk-taker	4.39	1.33	5.67	1.54	1.28	.0459	.810
Emotionally balanced	4.07	1.45	5.80	1.13	1.73	.2952	.113
Commitment to the common good	4.44	1.43	6.73	.45	2.29	-.0121	.949

Personal integrity	4.69	1.44	6.77	.43	2.08	-.2861	.125
Intelligent with practical judgment	4.55	1.32	5.80	1.13	1.25	-.1227	.518
High ethical standards	4.43	1.38	6.67	.61	2.24	-.1847	.329
Communication (listening, oral, written)	4.04	1.35	5.57	1.14	1.53	.0563	.768
Sensitivity, respect	3.86	1.43	6.13	1.01	2.27	.0608	.750
Motivating others	3.53	1.46	5.77	.73	2.24	.1692	.371
Networking	4.25	1.29	5.90	1.09	1.65	-.1529	.420
Planning	4.52	1.16	5.77	1.19	1.25	-.1481	.435
Delegating	4.84	1.09	6.00	1.05	1.16	-.1201	.527
Organizing	4.36	1.21	5.20	1.24	.84	-.0347	.856
Team building	3.77	1.47	5.67	1.03	1.90	.2190	.245
Coaching	3.59	1.32	5.57	1.19	1.98	-.0740	.698
Conflict management	3.54	1.37	5.23	1.61	1.69	.1576	.405
Time management and personal organization	4.99	1.12	5.67	.88	.68	-.1409	.458
Stress management	4.54	1.30	5.83	1.26	1.29	.0281	.883
Appropriate use of leadership styles	3.81	1.40	5.97	.76	2.16	.1925	.308
Ideological beliefs are appropriate to the group	4.63	1.27	6.43	.68	1.80	.0892	.639
Decision-making	4.28	1.30	6.07	.74	1.79	.0336	.860
Problem-solving	4.05	1.33	5.67	1.15	1.62	.0379	.842
Information gathering and managing	4.71	1.26	5.57	.86	.86	.2658	.156

Note. For ease of statistical analysis, response categories were converted to the following scale:
1 = 40% or less of the time
2 = 50% of the time
3 = 60% of the time
4 = 70% of the time
5 = 80% of the time
6 = 90% of the time
7 = 100% of the time

Note. r was computed based on each school's weighted mean.

p = 2-tailed significance

*Significant at p < .05

Self-rating responses by the presidents for all 37 attributes ranged from a low of 4.80 (approximately 75 percent of the time) to 6.77 (approximately 95 percent of the time). On the LAI-Self Instrument, in 14 of the 37 items, presidents rated themselves "90% of the time this is an accurate description of me" (PM>6.00) on the following attributes: visionary, achievement-oriented, accountable, assertive, willing to accept responsibility, enthusiastic (optimistic), dependable, committed to the common good, ethical, possessing personal integrity, sensitive (respectful), delegating, decision-makers, and ideologically compatible with the beliefs of the group.

The most highly rated of their attributes by the presidents were accountability, integrity, and personal ethics. The lowest self ratings were for insightfulness, tolerance of ambiguity and complexity, organization, conflict management, and tolerance of frustration.

Means and standard deviations were computed for each of the 37 attribute items for the 354 instructors who responded to this study from the 32 technical institutes (Table 1). The faculty were asked to indicate their perceptions of their presidents' leadership attributes on the same 37 attribute items as self evaluated by the presidents.

Responses for all 37 attributes ranged from a low of 3.53 (approximately 65 percent of the time) to a high of 5.14 (approximately 80 percent of the time). None of the faculty mean responses for presidents' leadership attributes were above "90% of the time" (TM>6.00). Overall, faculty members perceived presidents as demonstrating only four of the 37 attributes more than 80 percent of the time: energetic, achievement-oriented, assertive, and accepting of responsibility. The least demonstrated leadership attributes for presidents (all below "70% of the time") were: adaptable (open to change), tolerant of ambiguity and complexity, tolerant of frustration, sensitivity (respect), motivating others, team building, coaching, conflict management, and appropriate use of leadership styles.

A correlation coefficient was calculated as a measure of association between the presidents' (PM) and faculty members' (TM) mean responses to each item with an accepted significance level set at p<.05. In addition, a numerical difference (d) was computed between the mean response for presidents and the mean response for faculty members. Schools had to have responses from both teachers and presidents to be represented (responses were received from 30 of the 32 presidents).

Of the 37 items, the correlation for only one (confident, accepting of self) was significant at p<.05 (p=.042). While this correlation (r=.3736) had statistical significance at p<.05, the coefficient squared only explained approximately 14 percent of the variance, suggesting no practical significance. The remaining 36 items were not significant at p<.05.

Summary

After re-examination of Moss and Liang's leadership clusters (1990), these findings suggested that presidents perceived their individual leadership attributes as clustered predominately around action-oriented and ethical characteristics. The presidents perceived themselves as exhibiting least often those leadership attributes clustered around intellectual and interpersonal social skills.

Presidents rated themselves as demonstrating the attributes more often on all 37 leadership attributes than faculty members rated the presidents. In comparing mean responses of the two groups, the greatest differences between presidents' perceptions and faculty members' perceptions were in the following eight attributes: accountability, adaptability (open to change), commitment to the common good, personal integrity, high ethical standards, sensitivity (respect), appropriate use of leadership styles, and motivating others. The

greatest amount of agreement between the presidents and the faculty members regarding the presidents' leadership attributes occurred in the following six attributes: energetic, insightful, assertive, organizing, time management/personal organization, and information gathering. Because of the ratings and differences in perspective, it was concluded that presidents and faculty members did not agree on leadership attributes demonstrated by the presidents.

Are the findings in this study important to the future of vocational education? It seems that as an integral part of the broad scope of vocational education, technical training institute leaders must create a team effort with their faculty members if the goals set forth by the Department of Technical and Adult Education are to be met. Technical training institute leaders for tomorrow must understand themselves and their faculty members. Superior leaders of the future will have vision and effectively share this vision or mission with followers (Bennis, 1990).

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